المجلس الإسلامي
Islamic Council

7 August 1992

The Rt Hon John Major, MP
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London SW1

Dear Prime Minister,

I write to you as Prime Minister of a country much respected throughout the world for upholding people's basic human rights, and currently holding the presidency of the European Community, to appeal to you to use your utmost influence with the government of Tunisia to try to alleviate the extremely grave position many citizens of that country currently find themselves in.

Trials of some 300 political detainees opened in June and there is wide-spread and real concern that these procedures in no way conform to internationally accepted standards of justice. Long sentences are expected and even the death penalty.

The trials are the mere tip of an iceberg. Many thousands of political detainees, mostly arrested solely for alleged membership of opposition parties, are held illegally, incommunicado, without access to lawyers, family or medical attention, and torture is well documented. Amnesty International has more than 200 testimonies of torture from former detainees, doctors and eye-witnesses. Police officers routinely falsify the dates of arrest, tear up or ignore complaints and the people have no recourse to justice. The law is quite simply ignored.

Much can be done by the UK and the countries of the EC to put pressure on countries guilty of such horrendous violations of human rights and I urge you to raise the whole issue of Tunisia with your fellow leaders in an attempt to ease the suffering of many innocent Tunisians.

With best regards,
Yours sincerely,

Salem Azzam

Salem Azzam
Secretary General

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10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

26 August 1992

Dear Mr Azzam,

The Prime Minister has asked me to thank you for your letter of 7 August about Tunisia. I have been asked to reply.

We are concerned at reports of human rights abuses in Tunisia. We have made clear to the Tunisian Government, both bilaterally and in our capacity as EC Presidency, the importance we attach to respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. Our new Ambassador to Tunis, Mr. Michael Tait, recently drew the Tunisian government's attention to the section of the Declaration by the Lisbon European Council on relations between Europe and the Maghreb. This states that:

> "The Community and its member states consider that their relations with the Maghreb countries must be founded on a common commitment to ... respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in civil, political, economic, social and cultural matters, and for democratic values exemplified by free and regular elections; and to the establishment of democratic institutional systems guaranteeing pluralism, effective participation by citizens in the lives of their states and respect for the rights of minorities; and to tolerance and co-existence between cultures and religions".

We shall continue to monitor the situation in Tunisia and remind the government of our concern.

Yours Sincerely

Mark Adams

MARK ADAMS

Mr. Salem Azzam